Mass Central Rail Trail

Feasibility Study Overview

December 7, 2020

Continue scrolling down the page or use the navigation bar above to learn more about the project. **Mobile users, please rotate your device to landscape mode to ensure the best user experience.**

Project Background

Relocation of CMRR, Clinton, June 2, 1902

Massachusetts Central Railroad (MCRR) originally ran from Boston west 104 miles to Northampton.

Vision for the Mass Central Rail Trail (MCRT):

- Convert as much of the original 104-mile rail corridor as possible to an east-west, off-road, shared use path/greenway connecting Northampton to Boston.

MCRT forms several critical links for the Commonwealth's trail and greenway system in numerous visions and statewide planning documents, including:

- Massachusetts Department of Transportation's (MassDOT's) statewide Bike and Pedestrian Plans

- Department of Conservation & Recreation's (DCR's) Commonwealth Connections

- Various local and regional plans

Study Purpose

Corridor is from I-495 area in Hudson to existing terminus of the Norwottuck Rail Trail in Belchertown.

MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning initiated efforts to develop a feasibility study to complete the construction of the MCRT as an off-road shared-use path along the original MCRR corridor.

Image: MCRT/East Quabbin Land Trust, Ware

Ownership, condition and existing use of the original MCRR corridor varies greatly from Hudson to Belchertown.

- Sections converted to a shared-use path
- Sections in public ownership with intact railbed
- Sections of active railroads
- Sections in private ownership with original railbed obliterated or converted to different uses

Image: Mass Central Railroad, Ware

For sections converted to a shared-use path, the rail trail was constructed along the original MCRR railbed.

- Signage identifying those sections as the MCRT were installed.

Other sections of path were built in locations that deviate from the original MCRR corridor or were built along different former railroad corridors.

- Many of these trails have also been identified as the MCRT.

Image: MCRT/Wachusett Greenway, River Street, Holden

Development and other changes along the original MCRR corridor over the past century likely preclude construction of a shared-use path on the MCRR corridor over the entire length of the project corridor from Hudson to Belchertown.

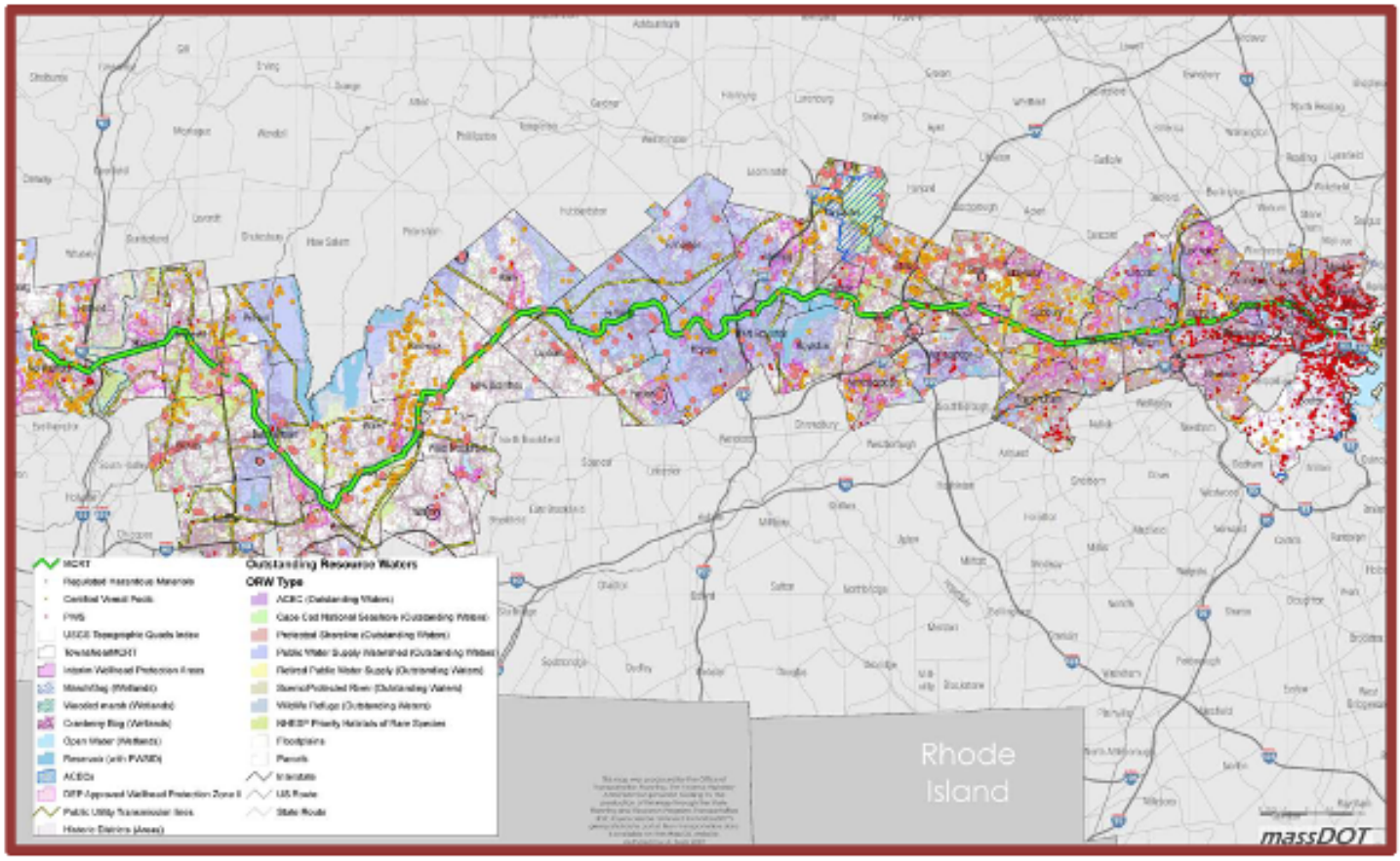
Minor diversions to off-road paths not on the MCRR corridor or use of on-road bikeways will likely be needed where rail bed has been physically obliterated and a shared-use path alternative is not practical or feasible.

Image: Chace Hill Road overpass, Sterling

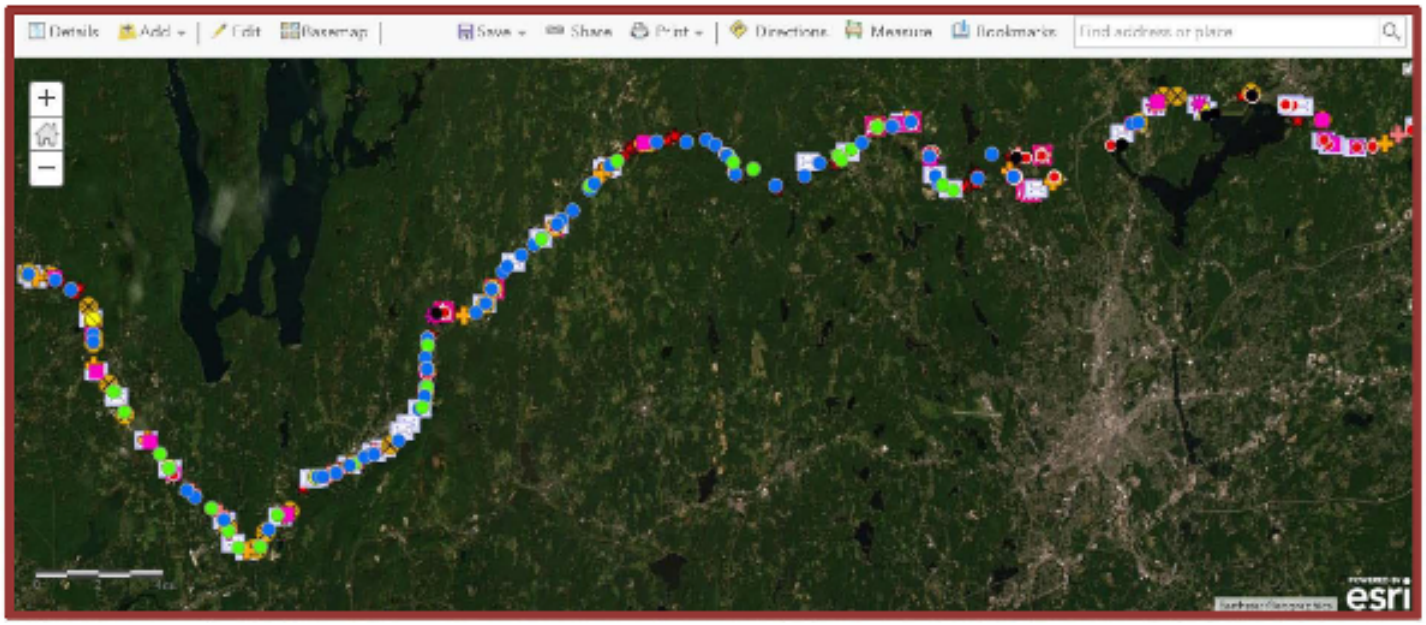
Project Graphics

Use the right arrow to advance the project graphics slideshow.

Study began with initial review using map supplied by TKMaps on behalf of the Mass Central Rail Trail Coalition.



A corridor GIS base map was compiled by the MassDOT GIS Section to show waterways and environmental resources, utilities, town lines, roadways and critical habitat.



The GIS base map was loaded onto mobile device and accessed with Collector app with field data collection menu.

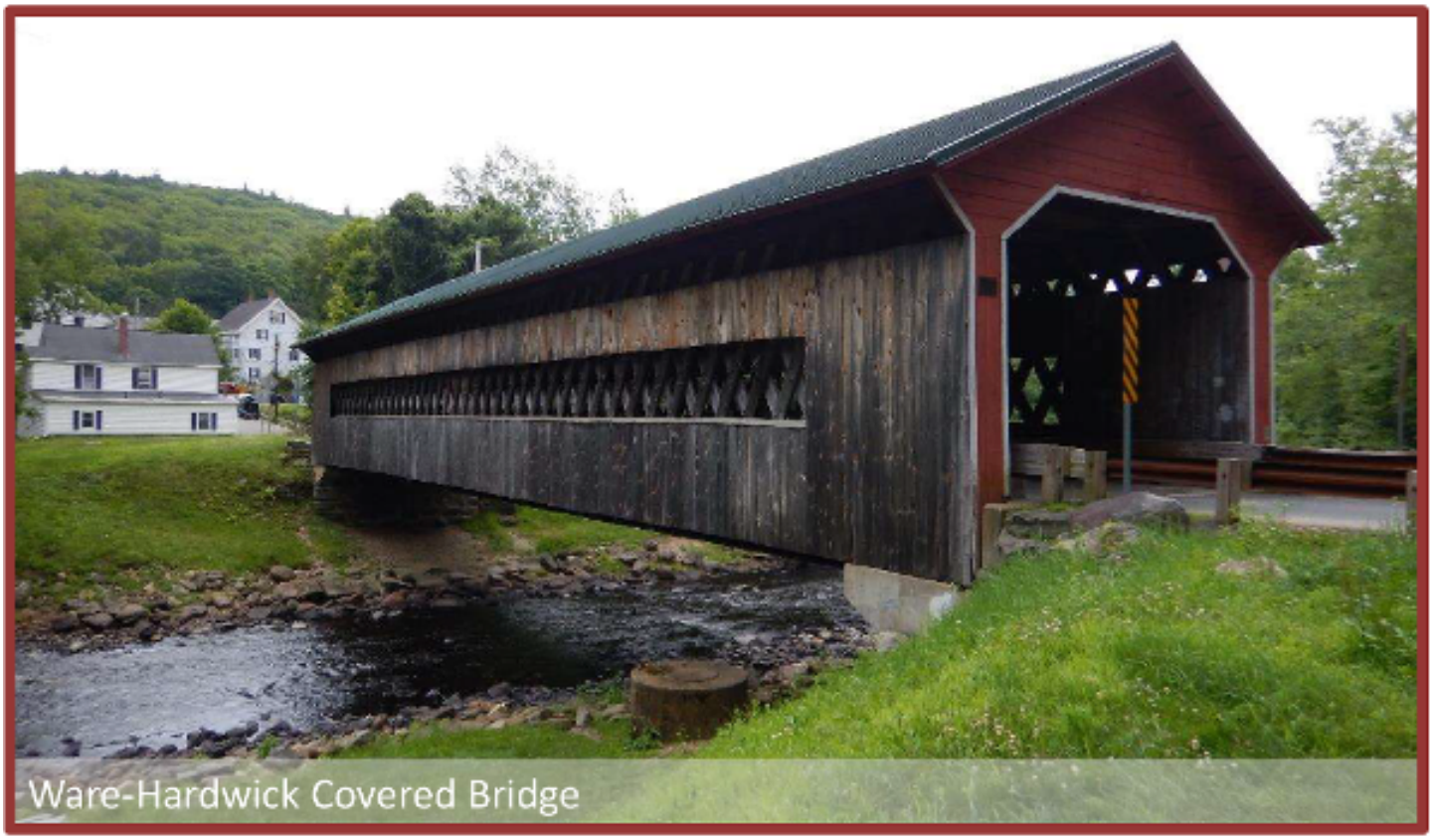
Berlin

I-495 Berlin

Original Railroad Corridor, South Barre

Former RR Bridge over Quinapoxet River, Holden

Moose Track, Barre



Ware-Hardwick Covered Bridge

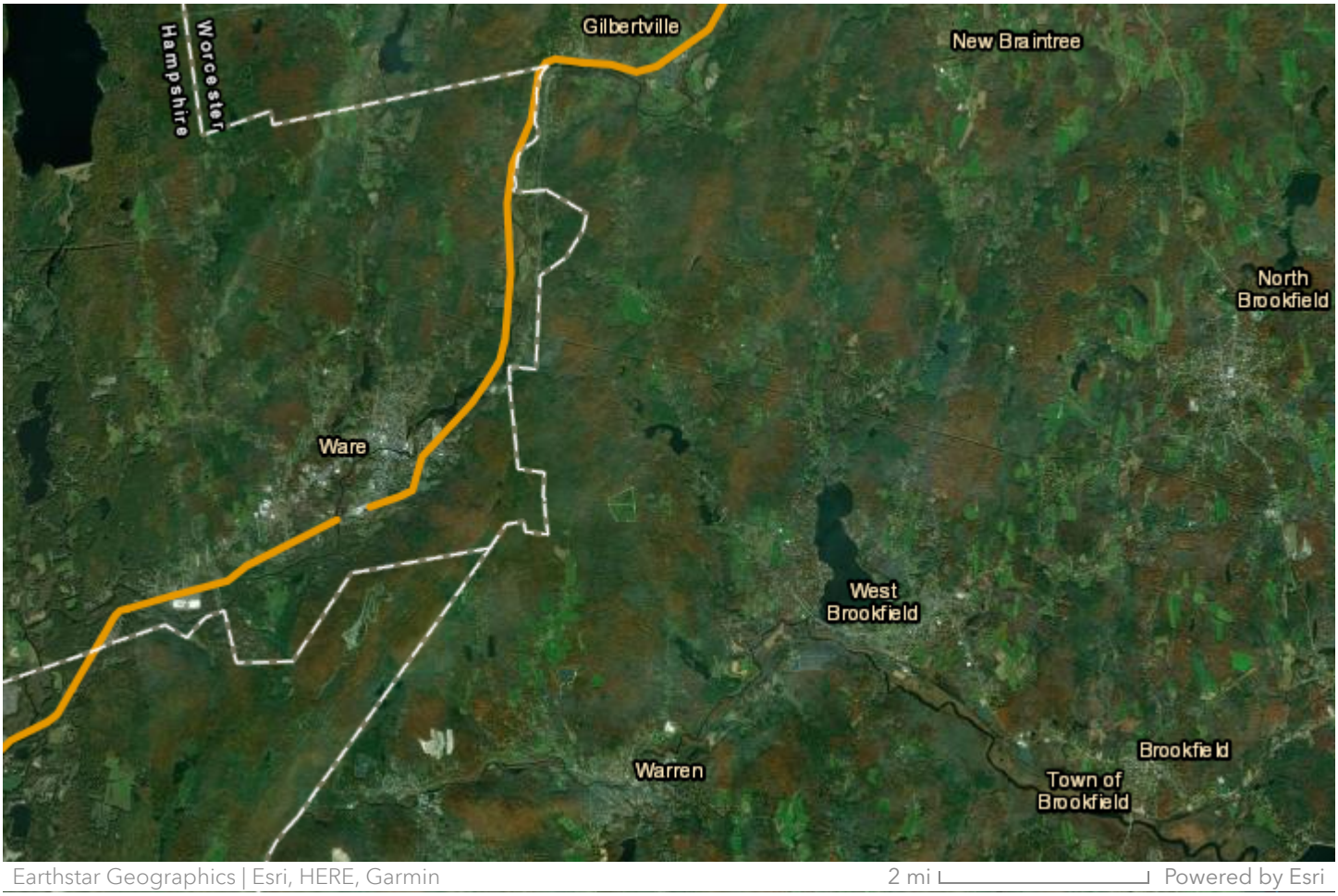
Former Railroad Station Bldg., Gilbertville

Feasibility Study Segments

Feasibility Study Segments

Segment 1

To view the full feasibility study for Segment 1 click here.

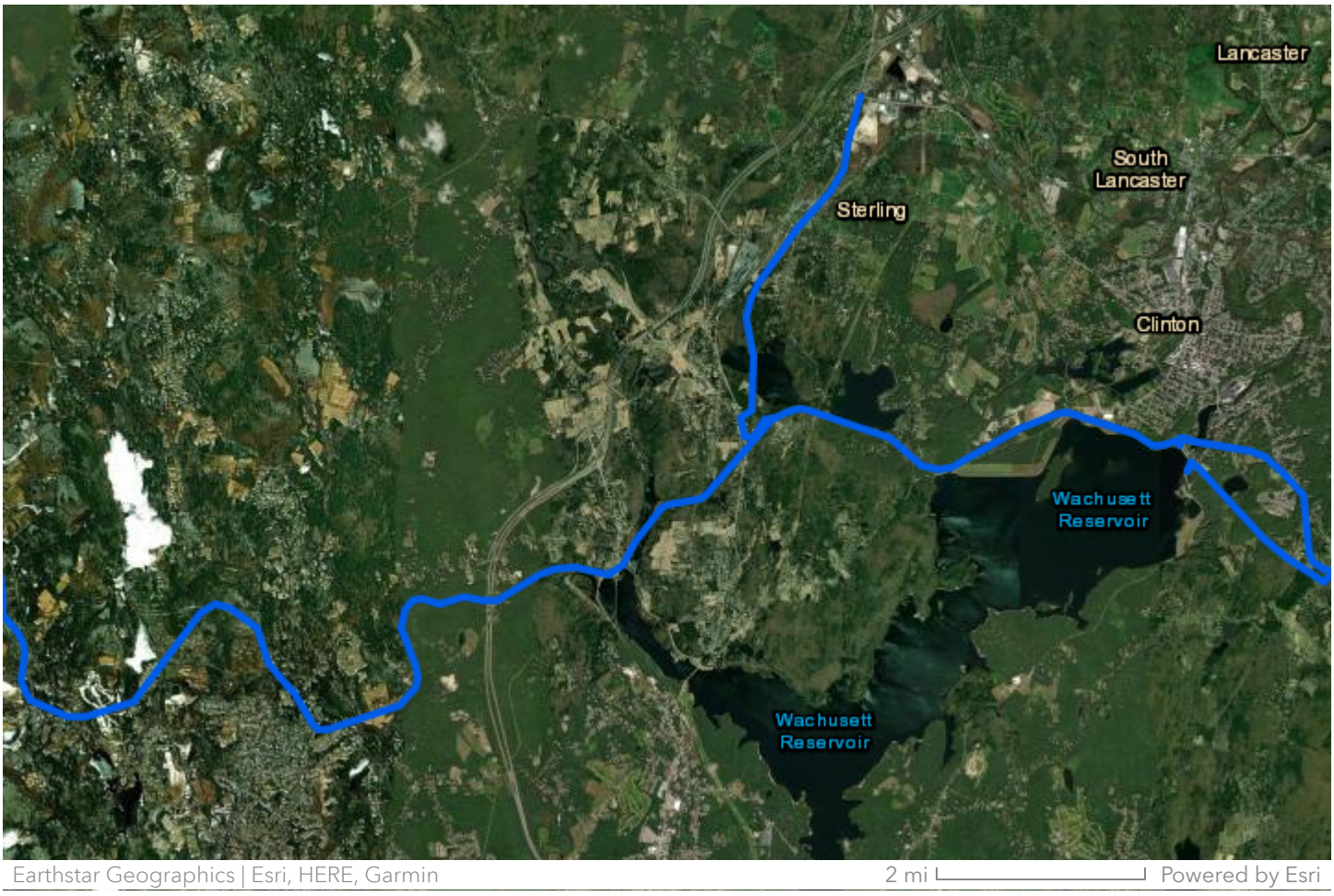


Segment 2 (Part 1)

To view the full feasibility study for Segment 2 click here.

Segment 2 (Part 2)

To view the full feasibility study for Segment 2 click here.

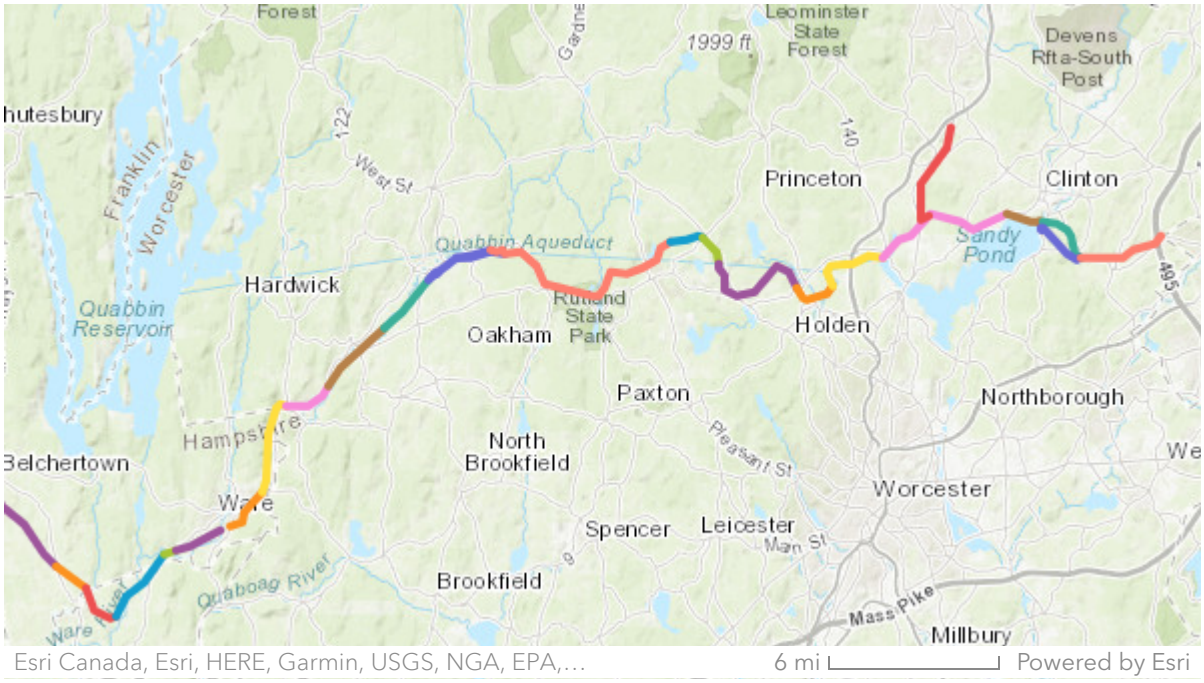


Segment 3

To view the full feasibility study for Segment 3 click here.

Project Map

The following map is interactive, tap the map to activate it. Use + to zoom in and click a subsegment to get more information. To view a detailed map of the proposed changes of a specific subsegment click on "Map PDF Link" next to the subsegment name.



MCRT Interactive Map

Comment Form

Thank you for taking the time to review project materials. The comment period for this study has concluded.